

# HEART HEALTH

FEBRUARY 2026

## NATIONAL HEART HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

February isn't just about hearts on cards; it's about the real heart that keeps you alive. Heart disease is the number one cause of death for both men and women in the United States. The good news? By making healthy choices every day, you can protect your heart and prevent most types of heart disease. Your heart is a strong muscle, but it needs care. Think of it like the engine of your body, it works nonstop to pump blood and oxygen. When you eat well, stay active, and manage stress, you help your heart run smoothly for years to come.



*Your health is your wealth. Investing in your health can prevent disease.*

### Why Heart Health Matters

A healthy heart means more energy, better mood, and a longer life. Poor heart health can lead to high blood pressure, clogged arteries, and even heart attacks. These issues often start silently, so prevention is key. In addition to regular check-ups with your primary care physician, and following medical advice given by your doctor, there are some habits you can follow to take further measures.

The best way to protect your heart is through small, consistent habits:

- Eat foods that lower cholesterol and blood pressure.
- Move your body every day, even a 30-minute walk helps.
- Avoid smoking and limit alcohol.
- Get enough sleep and manage stress.



## Nutrition & Health Recommendations

- Choose whole grains: Oats, quinoa, and whole wheat provide fiber that helps lower cholesterol.
- Eat healthy fats: Nuts, seeds, and olive oil offer heart-protective omega-3 fatty acids.
- Load up on fruits and vegetables: Rich in antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals.
- Limit:
  - Added Sugars: Excess sugar can raise triglycerides.
  - Sodium: Excess salt can raise blood pressure.
  - Saturated Fat: Saturated fat can raise overall cholesterol and LDL cholesterol.
- Stay active: Combine good nutrition with regular exercise for optimal heart health.

## Foods That Support Heart Health

**Oats:** High in soluble fiber to reduce LDL cholesterol.

**Walnuts:** Packed with omega-3 fatty acids and antioxidants to protect your heart.

**Apples:** Provide fiber and polyphenols for cardiovascular support.

**Leafy Greens:** Rich in potassium and nitrates for blood pressure control.

**Fatty Fish:** Salmon and sardines for omega-3s.

## INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup rolled oats
- 1 cup whole wheat flour
- ½ cup unsweetened applesauce
- ½ cup low-fat milk (or plant-based milk)
- ¼ cup maple syrup
- 1 large egg (or flax egg for vegan option)
- 1 tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 cup apple, peeled and grated
- ½ cup raw chopped walnuts
- 1 tsp vanilla extract



### Apple Walnut Oatmeal Muffins

Makes: 12 muffins

Prep Time: 15 minutes

Bake Time: 20 minutes



## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 350°F (175°C). Line a muffin tin with paper liners or lightly grease.
2. Spread walnuts in a single layer on a baking sheet.
3. Bake 6 to 8 minutes, stirring once halfway through.
4. Remove when fragrant and lightly golden and let cool completely.
5. In a large bowl, combine oats, flour, baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt.
6. In another bowl, whisk together applesauce, milk, maple syrup, egg, and vanilla.
7. Fold wet ingredients into dry ingredients until just combined (do not overmix).
8. Gently stir in grated apple and walnuts.
9. Divide batter evenly among muffin cups.
10. Bake for 18–22 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.
11. Cool on a wire rack. Enjoy!

Nutritional highlights of the muffins

Whole grains (oats and whole wheat flour) boost fiber and support cholesterol reduction.

Walnuts provide omega-3 fatty acids for heart health.

Applesauce replaces some fat and adds natural sweetness.

Minimal added sugar supports overall healthy habits.

## Nutrition Facts (Per Muffin)

- Calories: 130
- Total Fat: 4g
- Saturated Fat: 0.5g
- Trans Fat: 0g
- Cholesterol: 15mg
- Sodium: 10 mg
- Total Carbohydrates: 20g
- Dietary Fiber: 2g
- Total Sugars: 7g
- Added Sugars: 4g
- Protein: 4g
- Calcium: 30mg (2% DV)
- Iron: 1mg (5% DV)
- Potassium: 136mg (3% DV)
- Vitamin D: 0.18Qg (1% DV)